

Appl. No. : 10/688,646
Filed : October 17, 2003

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

- 1-8. (Canceled)
9. (Currently amended) A surgical system, comprising:
a first bone screw comprising a proximal portion and a distal portion, the proximal portion including a head and a portal, the proximal portion including a distal tip; and
[[An]] an inflatable connection rod, comprising:
a proximal end comprising a self-sealing valve;
a distal end comprising a tip;
a compliant, inflatable balloon between the proximal end and the distal end; and
a hardenable media for inflating the inflatable balloon;
wherein, when said hardenable media is hardened, the inflatable connection rod extend through the portal of the first bone screw to form forms a rigid structure.
10. (Currently amended) The surgical system ~~inflatable connection rod~~ of Claim 9, where the balloon comprises thin, reinforcing wires.
- 11-35. (Canceled)
36. (Currently amended) The surgical system ~~inflatable connection rod~~ of Claim 9, wherein when the hardenable media hardens, the connection rod is sufficiently rigid to fix an unstable vertebra to a stable vertebra.
37. (Currently amended) The surgical system ~~inflatable connection rod~~ of Claim 9, wherein the hardenable media comprises a rapid setting liquid polymer.
38. (Currently amended) The surgical system ~~inflatable connection rod~~ of Claim 37, wherein the rapid setting liquid polymer is light activated.
39. (Currently amended) The surgical system ~~inflatable connection rod~~ of Claim 9, wherein the tip is metallic.

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40. **(Currently amended)** The surgical system ~~inflatable connection rod~~ of Claim 9, wherein the inflatable balloon comprises a braided polymer.

41. **(New)** The surgical system of Claim 9, further comprising a second bone screw comprising a proximal portion and a distal portion, the proximal portion including a head and a portal, the proximal portion including a distal tip.